# IPU Contribution

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| Call for inputs in preparation of the Forum on  “Widening the Democratic Space: the role of youth in public decision-making” |

Young people between 15–25 years account for one fifth of the world’s population. Yet their disengagement from formal politics and lack of political representation are threats to democracy.

Youth voter turnout remains low across the world’s regions, and young people are largely absent from political parties and parliament. IPU [research](http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/youthrep-e.pdf) in 2016 revealed that less than two per cent of the world’s MPs are below 30 years of age. Worryingly, that statistic has remained unchanged since the last IPU surveys in 2014 and 2011.

At the forefront of many pro-democracy movements and protests, using social media and other non-traditional platforms to air their concerns, young people are nevertheless on the margins of mainstream politics. Yet they are directly affected by the many global challenges we face – poverty, unemployment, discrimination, migration, conflict and barriers to education. Youth engagement on finding lasting solutions to these problems is essential for the world. And for democracy.

Ensuring young people are engaged politically is an urgent priority if we are to build strong democratic societies. Engage youth on democracy and harness its power through bold action and changes in mindsets is IPU [call](http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/122/res-3.htm).

To make this happen, IPU is taking and is promoting a two-pronged approach: get more young people into parliament and involve young people in global political processes on the issues that matter. Both will yield youth perspectives in political decision-making that are more likely to ensure successful outcomes.

If we are to succeed on greater political involvement, we have to make headway on youth political representation: Quotas to raise the number of young people in parliament, lowering the age for voting and running for political office, using modern technology to increase political engagement and transparency, and boosting political empowerment through the inclusion of civic education on school curricula are among the key steps promoted by the IPU.

Winning youth over to re-engage with formal politics will require openness, transparency and effectiveness of political institutions. Rejuvenating democracy and restoring public confidence in political institutions and politicians among young people in particular are also seen by the IPU as crucial objectives. An IPU [document](http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/134/Rpt-gendebate.pdf) “Rejuvenating democracy, giving voice to youth”, outlines how parliaments and parliamentarians could help rejuvenate democracy and give the world’s young people a voice in political decision-making.

Based on the above, IPU recommends that the Forum on “Widening the Democratic Space: the role of youth in public decision-making” includes:

- A session or a panel on Youth participation in which IPU can present an overview of youth participation in parliament, the raison d’être of youth political participation and strategies to enhance youth representation;

- A session or a panel on “Rejuvenating democracy” in which IPU can present main strategies and needed changes to make democracy fit better to youth expectations;

IPU would also recommend that the Forum on “Widening the Democratic Space: the role of youth in public decision-making”:

- Invites, with the support of IPU’s Forum of young parliamentarians, a group of young men and women members of parliament from different countries to contribute to the Forum as participants, panellists, moderators or sessions/panels chairpersons.

- Based on the principles promoted by the young parliamentarians of the IPU: “No decisions about us without us”, encourages and supports the participation of as many young men and women as possible by inviting youth associations and fora, students, activists etc…